

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BUENOS 03539 01 OF 02 132144Z

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-02 DHA-02 IO-13 TRSE-00 ACDA-07

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 MCT-01

/081 W

-----132237Z 111686 /64

R 131235Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0461

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 3539

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SCUL SHUM PINT AR

SUBJECT: CHURCH AND STATE: CATHOLIC BISHOPS END THEIR SILENCE

REF: (A) BUENOS AIRES NOTAL 2766, (B) 76 BUENOS AIRES 7237,  
(C) 76 BUENOS AIRES 3866

1. SUMMARY. IN STATEMENT ISSUED MAY 7 AFTER SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING, CATHOLIC BISHOPS SPOKE OUT PUBLICLY FOR FIRST TIME SINCE MILITARY COUP OF MARCH 1976 IN TERMS OF DIRECT AND OPEN CONDEMNATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES OF GOVERNMENT. LANGUAGE WAS STRONGEST ARGENTINE CHURCH HAS USED, AND REPRESENTS UN-QUESTIONABLE DEPARTURE FROM POLICY OF QUIET DIPLOMACY ON HUMAN RIGHTS WHICH HAS GUIDED CHURCH OVER PAST YEAR. FAILURE OF EFFORTS TO INFLUENCE GOA PRIVATELY, AND INCREASING FRUSTRATION OF THE LARGE CORPS OF MODERATE BISHOPS, HAS MOVED THE CHURCH INTO A NEW PHASE IN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE GOA. WE WOULD EXPECT THAT CHURCH WILL WAIT NOW TO SEE WHAT RESPONSE  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BUENOS 03539 01 OF 02 132144Z

GOA MAKES BEFORE DECIDING UPON NEXT STEPS, BUT WE FORESEE INCREASING TENSIONS BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE. END SUMMARY.

2. MOST OF ARGENTINA'S 4 CARDINALS AND 80-OLD BISHOPS GATHERED MAY 2 THROUGH 6 IN CHURCH RETREAT AT SAN MIGUEL FOR 35TH SEMI-ANNUAL EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE. AGENDA INCLUDED PURELY RELIGIOUS MATTERS, REFORM OF STATUTES OF CATHOLIC ACTION ORGANIZATION,

REORGANIZATION OF ECCLESIASTICAL COURTS, AND REVIEW OF CURRENT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS OF COUNTRY. DURING MEETING, BISHOPS RECEIVED GENERALS MARTINEZ AND JAUREGUI, THE INTELLIGENCE AND OPERATIONS OFFICERS OF THE ARMY GENERAL STAFF, WHO OFFERED A BRIEFING ON SUBVERSION AND RELATED SUBJECTS.

3. CONFERENCE ISSUED PASTORAL DOCUMENT ON MAY 7, ENTITLED "CHRISTIAN REFLECTION FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE FATHERLAND." STATEMENT RECALLED THAT AFTER MEETING IN MAY 1976 THE BISHOPS HAD ISSUED A STATEMENT (REFTEL C) WHICH "WITH RESPECT AND HUMILITY" HAD TRIED TO INDUCE ALL TO WORK TOGETHER FOR COMMON GOOD. SINCE THAT TIME CHURCH HAD FOLLOWED COURSE OF PRIVATE APPROACHES TO AUTHORITIES AND PRIVATE DOCUMENTS TO INDICATE CHURCH CONCERNS.

4. HOWEVER, BISHOPS WENT ON, TIME HAS COME TO MAKE CONCERNS PUBLIC. THEY RECOGNIZED THAT HIDDEN FORCES MAY BE INFLUENCING INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN OF DEFAMATION AGAINST ARGENTINA, AND WANT NEITHER TO JOIN IT NOR BE USED BY IT. BUT THIS RISK, THEY SAID, CANNOT PREVENT THEM FROM SPEAKING OUT. "TO BE SILENT WOULD BE UNFAITHFUL." THEY REJECTED RIGHT OF ANYONE BUT CHURCH TO JUDGE ITS DOCTRINES, AND TO TRY TO LINK PRIESTS AND BISHOPS WITH UNACCEPTABLE IDEOLOGIES.

5. IN ITS STRONGEST AND MOST DIRECT WORDS, STATEMENT SAID: "...NO THEORY OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY, IN SPITE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCH SECURITY, CAN WRECK THE RIGHTS OF THE PERSON... A MISTAKEN CONCEPT OF PERSONAL OR SOCIAL SECURITY HAS BROUGHT

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BUENOS 03539 01 OF 02 132144Z

MANY CONSCIENCES TO TOLERATE AND EVEN ACCEPT THE VIOLATION OF THE ELEMENTARY RIGHTS OF MAN...TO ADMIT THE LEGITIMACY OF MURDER OF THE ENEMY, OF MORAL AND PHYSICAL TORTURE, THE ILLEGAL DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY OR THE ELIMINATION OF ALL THOSE WHO MAY BE SUSPECTED OF AGRESSION AGAINST PERSONAL OR COLLECTIVE SECURITY..." TO OVERCOME THIS, BISHOPS CALLED FOR "...FULL RULE OF JUST LAW."

6 GOING ON, BISHOPS NOTED PRINCIPLE THAT FOR ANY CHRISTIAN, INCLUDING THOSE WHO EXERCISE AUTHORITY, "...THE END DOES NOT JUSTIFY THE MEANS." THEY RECOGNIZED THE "...TERRORIST GUERRILLA WHICH HAS CONSTANTLY VIOLATED THE MOST ELEMENTAL HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS (CONVIVENCIA)..." THEY HAVE "...HEARD MANY TIMES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER WHICH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE ARMED FORCES WISHED TO IMPRESS UPON ITS EFFORT...", AND ARE FORCED TO REMIND (THEM) THAT THE CHRISTIAN INCLUDES IN HIS CHARACTER A HUMBLE COMMITMENT TO SELF-RESTRAINT.

7. THEY THEN LIST A SERIES OF "SERIOUS CONCERNS": THE

NUMEROUS DISAPPEARANCES AND KIDNAPPINGS WITH THE LACK OF OFFICIAL RESPONSE TO APPEALS, WHICH APPEARS TO INDICATE THAT GOVT HAS NOT GAINED FULL CONTROL OF USE OF FORCE; SITUATION OF NUMEROUS PERSONS EVIDENTLY TAKEN BY GROUPS WHO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES AS MILITARY OR POLICE ABOUT WHOM INQUIRIES OF FAMILIES AND EVEN BISHOPS BRING NO INFORMATION; FACT THAT MANY PRISONERS, ACCORDING TO THEIR DECLARATIONS, HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED TO TORTURE WHICH IS UNACCEPTABLE FOR ANY CHRISTIAN AND WHICH DEGRADES NOT ONLY VICTIM BUT TORTURER; AND LENGTHY DETENTIONS WITHOUT EXPLANATION AND WITHOUT ELEMENTARY HUMAN NECESSITIES INCLUDING RELIGIOUS SUPPORT.

8. IN ADDITION, BISHOPS CRITICIZED ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL POLICIES WHICH REGARDLESS OF THEORY LEAVE WORKERS UNABLE TO MEET CONDITIONS OF DIGNIFIED LIFE AND IN DANGER OF BECOMING SOURCE OF MARXIST SUBVERSION. THEY CALLED FOR AN END TO TERRORISM, PRAISED WORK OF RELIGIOUS AMONG AFFLICTED AND CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BUENOS 03539 01 OF 02 132144Z

POOR, AND SAID THAT WORK IN BENEFIT OF POOR AND ABANDONED CANNOT BE SUSPECTED OF BEING MARXIST.

9. COMMENT. THE ARGENTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH HAS MOVED SIGNIFICANTLY WITH THIS STATEMENT FROM THE POLICY IT HAS FOLLOWED OVER THE PAST YEAR. THIS IS THE STRONGEST AND MOST CRITICAL LANGUAGE IT HAS YET USED IN PUBLIC. WE HAD BEEN TOLD THAT BISHOPS WOULD FINALLY SPEAK OUT AFTER THIS CONFERENCE IF GOA HAD NOT RESPONDED TO THE PRIVATE EFFORTS OF THE CHURCH TO IMPROVE ITS HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE. IT APPEARS NOW THAT MAJORITY OF BISHOPS,

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BUENOS 03539 02 OF 02 132148Z

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-02 DHA-02 IO-13 TRSE-00 ACDA-07

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 MCT-01

/081 W

-----132237Z 112022 /64

R 131235Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0462  
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY ASUNCION  
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO  
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 3539

THOSE WHO UP TO THIS TIME HAVE BEEN UNWILLING TO OPENLY ACCUSE GOA, MAY HAVE TAKEN A NEW STANCE. SHIFT OF MAJORITY TO OPENLY CRITICAL VIEW OF GOA MAY HAVE DIVERSE AFFECT ON CORPS OF BISHOPS THEMSELVES. GOA HAS BEEN CHALLENGED, AND WE EXPECT CHURCH WILL NOT PAUSE TO SEE HOW GOA WILL RESPOND. IF, AS WE EXPECT, GOA WILL NOT OR CANNOT SIGNIFICANTLY AND QUICKLY IMPROVE ITS HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE, WE FORESEE INCREASING CHURCH-STATE TENSION. BASED ON THE INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US, WE WOULD EXPECT THE VATICAN TO JOIN AND SUPPORT THIS CHANGE IN CHURCH POLICY. THE SO FAR LARGELY SILENT MODERATE ELEMENTS IN ARGENTINE POLITICAL LIFE MAY BEGIN TO SPEAK OUT MORE FORCEFULLY, HIDING BEHIND CLERICAL SKIRTS TO SOME DEGREE. THIS PROBABLY IS A NEGATIVE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE RELATIVELY MODERATE VIDELA-VIOLA FORCES IN THE GOA. IF THE CHURCH IS NOW PREPARED TO INDICATE THAT ITS FAITH IN VIDELA'S WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY TO GAIN CONTROL HAS NOW SUCCUMBED TO NEED FOR CHURCH TO DECLARE ITSELF, THEN ALMOST SOLID SUPPORT FOR VIDELA AMONG MODERATE ELEMENTS MAY WEAKEN. AT SAME TIME, CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BUENOS 03539 02 OF 02 132148Z

HARDLINERS IN MILITARY MAY BE INCLINED TO INCREASE CRITICISM OF VIDELA'S SUPPOSED WEAKNESS IN LEADERSHIP, WHICH THEY COULD SEE AS ENCOURAGING CHURCH TO ATTACK GOA. ON OTHER HAND, CHURCH STANCE COULD HELP VIDELA ARGUE WITH HARDLINERS THAT HUMAN RIGHTS IMPROVEMENTS ARE ESSENTIAL TO PREVENT CONFRONTATION WITH CHURCH. OPINIONS DIFFER ON IMPACT OF CHURCH STATEMENT, BUT ALL AGREE IT IS IMPORTANT AND MAY OPEN NEW AND CRITICAL PHASE IN HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION.

10. GOA HAS NOT YET ISSUED ANY FORMAL REPLY TO BISHOP'S STATEMENT, AND IT MAY RESTRAIN ITSELF TO COUNTERATTACKS IN PRESS STORIES AND INDIVIDUAL COMMENTS INSPIRED BY GOA OFFICIALS AND MILITARY COMMANDERS. GIVEN FACT BISHOPS STATEMENT WAS RELEASED ON WEEKEND, AND MOST EDITORS WOULD WANT TO WAIT FORE SOME INDICATION OF GOA POLICY ON STATEMENT, THERE WAS LITTLE IMMEDIATE REACTION UP TO MAY 10. HOWEVER, LA OPINION AS EARLY AS MAY 8 HAD SELECTED HARSHER CRITICISMS FROM STATEMENT AND FEATURED THEM IN "NEWS" RATHER THAN "EDITORIAL" COVERAGE WHILE LA NACION MAY 10 CARRIED LONG EDITORIAL

ATTACKING BISHOPS' POSITION. PAPER SUGGESTED IN NEAR SARCASM THAT CATHOLICS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE INSTITUTIONS DEFENDING THE COUNTRY MAY HAVE SOME DOUBTS ABOUT THE SINCERITY OF THE FAITH OF OTHER CATHOLICS WHO ARE INCLINED TO JUSTIFY VIOLENCE AND CRIME. FOR THESE CATHOLICS OUTSIDE THE HIERARCHY, "KEEPING SILENT WOULD ALSO BE UNFAITHFUL." LA NACION CRITICIZED MENTALITY OF THOSE WHO SEE NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AGGRESSORS AND THEIR VICTIMS.  
CHAPLIN

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PUBLIC DISCLOSURE, HUMAN RIGHTS, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS, RELIGIOUS LEADERS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Sent Date:** 13-May-1977 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Date:** 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1977BUENOS03539  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D770169-1009  
**Format:** TEL  
**From:** BUENOS AIRES  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1977/newtext/t19770563/aaaacbyx.tel  
**Line Count:** 233  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Message ID:** 5b813895-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ACTION ARA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 5  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 77 BUENOS AIRES 2766, 76 BUENOS AIRES 7237, 76 BUENOS AIRES 3866  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 02-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 2542070  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** CHURCH AND STATE: CATHOLIC BISHOPS END THEIR SILENCE  
**TAGS:** SCUL, SHUM, PINT, AR  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/5b813895-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009